

Peter Stuyvesant's leadership of New Netherland

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Introduction

Research on the colony of New Netherland is quite a new phenomenon. When looking into the studies made of the subject, most of them are quite new and have been published in the late 20th century or 21st century. The studies have been made mostly by Dutch researchers or Dutch American researchers on the east coast of the USA. The cultural heritage of the Dutch has often been forgotten or given very little attention compared to the influence of the British. The subject of New Amsterdam is remarkably interesting to me. How a small trade post created to take part in the American fur trade became Holland's biggest colony in North America and how it left its mark on the huge Metropolis that New York is today. Was the influence of the British necessary for the city's future growth, or could the Dutch have owned one of the world's largest cities?

Focus of thesis

Instead of focusing on the heyday of the metropolis, I will look into its humble origins. Especially I will be focusing on the government and leaders of the colony's last couple of decades. The biggest point of interest in this endeavor is Peter Stuyvesant (1612 – 1672). He was the general director of New Amsterdam from 1647 till its conquest by the British in 1664. Stuyvesant is known as the best leader the colony ever had, and pretty much the reason why the colony reached the modest success it did in its last decade. I wanted to find out what made Stuyvesant different and how he managed the colony. Regarding him my main research question is: How did Peter Stuyvesant govern as the director general and how powerful was he in the colony? In addition, I will talk about his relationship with the settlers, and how they saw him. I will also look into the previous general directors to compare and see what set Stuyvesant apart. This study will heavily focus on the colony's politics and will be a study in political history.

The Sources and research literature

As my source I will be using the translated and transcribed texts released by the New Netherland institute, also known as The New Netherland project and the digital collections of the New York state archive. The New Netherland institute was

founded in 1986 to cast light onto the lost legacy of the Dutch in America. Their goal was to translate and digitalize the original Dutch sources that have been saved in the New York state archive. These texts have been made available online to be read in English, for those like me, that cannot read the original Dutch texts. The source is the register of the provincial secretary and contains a lot of different types of texts. These texts contain mostly the government's official files and judicial cases. There are also a lot of texts just about dealings between settlers and such. These will most likely not be useful for me in this study. From the New Netherland Institute, I will also use an article just about Peter Stuyvesant. From the New York state archives I will be using mostly the records of the correspondence between officials and members of both the governments of the colony and of the Netherlands. I will also use a biography article from the University of Groningen that's about Peter Stuyvesant. The most interesting sources to me are the ones that deal in politics and especially the ones that are about Peter Stuyvesant and his working with the government. The obvious downside to these sources is that I'll be completely at the mercy of the translation and it is possible that some things could have been wrongly translated. However, many respected researchers of this subject, such as Jaap Jacobs, who have been able to read the original Dutch sources have vouched for the reliability and correctness of the translations.¹ Another point of possible criticism is that in the government related sources they are often really focused on the just government and do not really give a voice or offer a perspective from the regular settlers. I can, however, fill these voids with other sources. The New Netherland Institute does have sources from the birth of the colony (1624) to the British takeover (1664) but I will use the sources that fit my timeline of interest, which is the years from 1647 to 1664, as these are the years of Peter Stuyvesant's time in office.

The previous research literature that I will mainly use in this study is Jaap Jacobs' the colony of New Netherland, a Dutch settlement in Seventeenth century America. This book is by Dutch Professor and researcher Jaap Jacobs. It is his most recent book and his second one focusing on New Netherland as a whole. This book is the one that focuses more closely on New Amsterdam, which is why I chose it over the other one. Jacobs' study is used mostly for historical background, but I also seek to point out points where I disagree with Jacobs. Jacobs' book is an

¹ Jacobs 2009, ix.

exemplary work as an all-around solid historical piece, where he goes through all the important parts of New Amsterdam. But since his book tries to cover everything in a single work, he cannot go in to as much detail as I hope to in my study. His focus is mostly in the colony's economics and politics, but still not as deep as it could be. He also seemed to be quite lenient when talking about some of the heavier subjects in the book, such as slavery. Another great book that I will use is the *Gotham: history of New York* by Mike Wallace and Edwin G. Burrows. This book is a great study into the history of New York, but I will only use the beginning and the parts that fit my timeline. This book provides some wonderful little details that give a deeper look into the world of New Netherland. I will also use Dennis J. Maika's article *Securing the Burgher Right in New Amsterdam*, which is from Joyce D. Goodfriend's article collection called *Revisiting New Netherland: Perspectives on early Dutch America*. Maika's article is more focused on the economic angle than Jacobs' book, but is also useful for background on some political aspects. I will also use Howard J. Wiarda's study, *The Dutch diaspora: the Netherlands and its settlements in Africa, Asia and the Americas*. From this study I will obviously just use the part focusing on North American settlements. The most interesting parts for me are the higher tier merchants whose wealth and connections to Amsterdam had quite a sway in the colony's government.

Methodology

In terms of methodology, the study is qualitative since that is the best way to find an answer to my research question. I do have to be careful and thorough when going through the sources, because when studying political history you have to always keep in mind that in politics people are looking after their own interests and they do not write down their intentions for future research. In political history it's also important to keep historical context in mind because every political decision is connected to the periods social and economic circumstances.² The study will also contain a couple of terms and distinctions that I think important to explain here. Important distinctions are the ones between New Netherland, New Amsterdam and Netherlands. Netherlands is the nation and land area located in Europe, which is sometimes also called Holland. New Netherlands meant all of Netherlands' colonies, but in this thesis, it

² Kuukkanen, Lindroos, Piekka 1998, 11.

just means their colony in North America. And lastly New Amsterdam was the largest village of New Netherlands and the capital. This town would later become New York, but I digress. The first term would be WIC, which means the West India Company. This was a trading company in charge of Dutch business in America, and they controlled and owned the colony of New Amsterdam for most of its existence. They were also the employer of Peter Stuyvesant, so the company plays a big part when looking into Stuyvesant rule. Second term is burgomaster. Burgomaster is a name used in New Amsterdam for a judicial leader. In New Amsterdam they always had two burgomasters to decide on the more important judicial cases and also to work as a kind of a governor. They were always below the general director and high officials of the WIC, but still very important officials in the city. The third term I'll explain here is "schepenen". Schepens were local and municipal officers who also helped in the judicial system. They usually worked with the less important civil and local cases.³

Structure of the thesis

In addition to this introduction my thesis consists of two main chapters and a conclusion. The first one examines Peter Stuyvesant's arrival and rise to power in New Netherland. This chapter will be split into two sub chapters. One will be looking at Stuyvesant's background, history and qualifications. Here we can compare him to other leaders and see where he differs. The next sub chapter will be about his power in the government and his manner of ruling. Here I'm interested in the actual changes he made to achieve his goals to better the colony. Chapter two focuses on Stuyvesant's relationship with the settlers and the people living in New Amsterdam who were not part of the government or WIC. Here my aim is to find out how the settlers of the colony reacted to the changes made by Stuyvesant and if he faced any backlash for his actions. The chapters are thematic, but their themes will be developed chronologically

Historical context

In terms of historical context, the most important concept to keep in mind is European colonialism. Colonizing north and south America was quite common phenomenon among powerful European countries in the 17th century. Countries such

³ Jacobs 2009, 93.

as England, Spain, Portugal and France were right there colonizing America with the Dutch. The point of colonialism was to enrich the motherland by taking advantage of overseas territories. Doing this they discovered rare materials and valuable markets in the new world. A valuable new market was the original reason for the foundation of the New Amsterdam colony in 1624. The very profitable fur market in the east coast of North America was the original reason the WIC wanted to start a colony next to the Hudson River.⁴ The trade of beaver fur was especially important to New Amsterdam, and was one of the few profitable and successful aspects of the Dutch colony. For its first decade New Amsterdam was just an average sized trading post made to protect the WIC's trade with the Indians but was slowly supported to become an actual colony. This was done by encouraging Dutch citizens to move to New Amsterdam with incentives such as free land and tax breaks. This was difficult because the Netherlands were in an economic boom and Holland was a good place to live. Not many people wanted to take a big risk with moving to the new world when their lives were good enough already.⁵ This is why a lot of the people who originally moved to New Netherland were poor farmers and people who were looking for the one thing Netherland was known for in the early 17th century, religious tolerance.⁶ Through its first decade New Amsterdam also had difficulties in making profit. New Amsterdam's leaders fought many wars with the local Indians without ever really getting any definitive results, which was obviously bad for the business. For example, in 1639 the general director Willem Kieft demanded reparations from the local Indians for the protection the Dutch provided them, and when he was refused, he started a minor war which led to the deaths of many Dutch soldiers.⁷ The growth of New Amsterdam was slow and painful, but the efforts of Amsterdam and WIC officials started paying off in the 1640s. The decision to make New Amsterdam the capital of New Netherland with advancing the government and giving it economic advances where necessary. Steps to make New Amsterdam the definitive capital of Holland's North American colonies were decisions such as appointing Peter

⁴ Jacobs 2009, 106.

⁵ Jacobs 2009, 32.

⁶ Jacobs 2009, 32.

⁷ Jacobs 2009, 76.

Stuyvesant as general director and giving New Amsterdam the monopoly on trade with Europe in early 1650s.⁸

⁸ Maika 2005, 98.

1. Peter Stuyvesant's rise to power and militarism

1.1 Peter Stuyvesant lands in North America

Peter Stuyvesant's role in the growth of New Amsterdam is an interesting one. The early decades of New Amsterdam were marred with disappointing financial results, difficulties to entice new settlers and continuous conflicts with the local Indians. New Amsterdam had had a few leaders before him. The colony of New Netherland was always led by a general director, who was employed by the WIC. Before Stuyvesant New Amsterdam had five general directors: Cornelius May, Willem Verhulst, Peter Minuit, Wouter van Twiller and Willem Kieft. All of these leaders were thought to be inexperienced and ill-equipped to properly lead the colony. Pretty much none of these men had experience leading or about life in the new world and gained their appointment through wealth or family relations.⁹ The inexperience of the first couple of leaders I can understand since in its earliest years New Amsterdam was never meant to grow, it was just meant to be a trading post and Dutch merchants' access point to the North American market.

Peter Stuyvesant was different from these men because he had actual experience and qualifications for the job of director general of New Netherland. For example, he worked as the governor of Curacao, Aruba and Bonaire for 14 years before coming to New Amsterdam.¹⁰ Stuyvesant was determined to grow Holland's influence on the east coast of North America, which obviously led to conflicts with the English and local Indians. The sorry state of the colony at the time of Stuyvesant's arrival could be seen in many of his early acts. One of these for example is Peter Stuyvesant taking a personal loan from Amsterdam to steady his situation in New Amsterdam.¹¹ Another example would be Stuyvesant selling his ship to New Haven of New England, and asking the payment to be in the form of food, which indicates possible food shortages in the colony.¹² Stuyvesant also had a more graceful way of dealing with conflicts than the previous general directors. For

⁹ Jacobs 2009, 44.

¹⁰ Wallace & Burrows 1999, 41.

¹¹ New Netherland Institute register of provincial secretary, volume 2, 401.

¹² NNI ROPS, volume 2, 489.

example, in 1639 Kieft ruined the colony's relations with local Indians by demanding tributes for the protection New Amsterdam's soldiers offered to the Indian tribes, and upon refusal sent soldiers to attack the tribes.¹³ Or when in 1643 when the New Netherland's town of Achter Col was attacked and raided by Indians because of a conflict between Kieft and the tribes leaders.¹⁴ Stuyvesant's approach to dealing with the Indians was more conciliatory. For example, in 1655 Stuyvesant made a deal with a local Indian tribe. Under the deal the Indian tribe agreed to submit to Stuyvesant's authority and gave the Dutch the right to use its lands in return for a small payment.

On this day, date underwritten, personally appeared Sauwenare, sachem¹⁵ of Wieckgeskeck, Annenameckm ... declared before the honorable director general and council of New Netherland and the undersigned witnesses, ... convey, transfer, cede and surrender to the Hon. Director General Petrus Stuyvesant and the council in New Netherland all their patrimonial right, authority, jurisdiction, ownership and other prerogatives;....¹⁶

The document also tells us that the tribe was not forced into this deal, which is significant to show, that Stuyvesant did not always resort to violence like his predecessors. Stuyvesant also went against his predecessor's ways and sold European weapons to Indian tribes.¹⁷ The Dutch managed to create a better trade relationship with the Indians, than the English or the French, because converting was not a part of Dutch Calvinism.¹⁸ I think Stuyvesant's approach is also a sign of experience and maturity. It also possibly shows his concern for his soldiers, whose lives he might saving by taking the diplomatic route.

When Stuyvesant was appointed, he had quite simple goals for New Amsterdam. He wanted to grow the colony, have good relationship between the settlers and the administration and most importantly, he wanted to form a strong

¹³ Jacobs 2009, 79.

¹⁴ NNI ROPS volume 2, 171.

¹⁵ Meaning Indian chief.

¹⁶ NNI ROPS volume 3, 413.

¹⁷ New York State Archive New Netherland council Dutch colonial administrative correspondence, letter from commissioners of the united colonies (new England) (New York State Archives. New York (Colony). Council. Dutch colonial administrative correspondence, 1646-1664. Series A1810-78. Volume 11, documents 9b-9c & 9d, page 1, side 2.).

¹⁸ Wiarda 2007, 54.

authority for the WIC and himself. To advance these goals Stuyvesant did make progress early. In trying to create good relationship between the WIC and the settlers Stuyvesant did things like drive Kieft and members of his administration away to the Netherlands and form a Nine Men committee. This committee was formed of three farmers, three merchants and three regular workers of New Amsterdam and was meant to give power to the settlers.¹⁹ However the committee did not have that much of actual power, because Stuyvesant could just deny their propositions if he wanted to. Stuyvesant also tried to better the relationship with just helping the settlers. For example, quite early into his first year as director general he sold his ship to a private merchant. As part of this deal, the merchant agreed to give some of the money he was spending on the ship to the poor of New Amsterdam.²⁰ It is hard to say if Stuyvesant did this wanting to help people, or to make the settlers accept him but the end result was the same. So early on I cannot deny that he succeeded in making himself likeable and respected in the colony. This was not rare though. Even Willem Kieft, who was exiled from New Amsterdam upon Stuyvesant's arrival, was well liked during his time in office.²¹

In trying to grow the colony Peter Stuyvesant had to face the simple challenge that was restricting people from moving to the new world: the cost. Moving across the Atlantic was very expensive and emotionally taxing. The boat trip took a long time and there was no guarantee of quality of life in the colonies. Stuyvesant could not do anything to the quality of life in the Netherlands, so he had to take action with the aspect he could influence. In the early years of 1650s the West India Company continuously lowered the price of moving to North America and in 1656 if you knew a craft, such as woodworking or farming, you could move to the colony for free.²² This definitely grew the colony, but still the risk was not truly worth it for already successful people. Stuyvesant himself said he was not happy that they could not make more successful and established people move there.²³ Stuyvesant tried getting more soldiers and weaponry for New Netherlands army quite often.

¹⁹ Jacobs 2009, 81.

²⁰ NNI ROPS volume 2, 401.

²¹ NNI ROPS volume 2, 118.

²² Jacobs 2009, 50.

²³ Jacobs 2009, 51.

For me, the defining characteristic of Peter Stuyvesant's time in charge of New Netherland was his accumulation of power. There is not enough in the sources about Stuyvesant's early years explaining how he accrued his influence in the colony, but I believe it was made possible by the Nine Men committee he founded, that he kept filled with his supporters. This would have allowed him to slowly but surely strengthen his control. The sources are clearer about how he used his power later, when he had set up the administration the way he wanted it. Stuyvesant was determined to keep the control of New Amsterdam in the "right" hands. Only people who were supportive and positive towards the West India Company were allowed to make decisions.²⁴ A good example can be found in 1649, when some men on the Nine Men committee disagreed with Stuyvesant on an issue and wanted an audience with the leaders of Amsterdam, Stuyvesant repeatedly blocked their efforts. This led to the arrest of committee members when they tried to correspond with the leaders in Amsterdam behind Stuyvesant's back.²⁵ Stuyvesant's desire for power was not limited to just New Netherland either. He implemented many practices for the purpose of strengthening New Netherland's military. Like when he asked for 700 soldiers for possible wars against England in the late 1640s, which was of course denied.²⁶ Or in early 1650s Stuyvesant and WIC implemented a policy where people would get to move to New Netherland for free if they served as soldiers for a few years first, before being freed to do what they wanted to.²⁷ This was a smart move for Stuyvesant because he could just say he was trying to bring people to the colonies, but was actually using this policy to actually grow his army. In his previous position as general director of the ABC islands (Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao) he was also known for being strict with power and was described as despotic.²⁸ This gives more validity to the belief that Stuyvesant did the things he did more in hopes of power and control, rather than doing them for the settlers of for the colony.

I strongly believe that Peter Stuyvesant had quite great ambitions when he took the job of General Director of New Netherland. All of his early decisions give me the impression that he planned for actual expansion on the continent. West

²⁴ Jacobs 2009, 86.

²⁵ Jacobs 2009, 82.

²⁶ NNI ROPS volume 3, 84.

²⁷ Jacobs 2009, 41.

²⁸ NNI History and heritage, Dutch Americans, Peter Stuyvesant.

India Company was actually not known for founding and managing colonies, but just for establishing trading posts and finding new possible markets.²⁹ Stuyvesant actually seemed to be quite warlike just like his predecessors, but just with way more planning and strategy behind his ambitions. I will come back to this point later in this thesis, but Stuyvesant made multiple actual attempts at conquering cities. As I have mentioned before, he also had a way of getting Indian tribes to submit to his authority, and this also worked with some English cities too. I also think this aspect of Stuyvesant's time in power is not represented nearly enough in Jaap Jacobs' book, and I think it is important enough to be included. Since Jacobs' book is meant to be a study into all of New Amsterdam and to give the reader a full picture of the colony, this should be included to also give a full picture of Stuyvesant's governing. Stuyvesant's dictator like qualities are significant part of New Amsterdam's development and growth. This manner of ruling and possible abuse of power is an important part of history that needs to be told.

1.2 Peter Stuyvesant's militaristic views

To me, Peter Stuyvesant's time as the general director of New Netherland is defined by his achievements in growing the colony and by his strong use of his authority. Stuyvesant's achievements cannot be denied, but I do wonder if his means justified the ends. When Peter Stuyvesant took the job of director general, he believed that bringing New Netherland to glory was the job that God had planned for him. He was even quoted as saying "I shall govern you as a father his children" which really shows that he did have good intentions, at least in the beginning.³⁰ In his later years it did become apparent that he actually was quite warlike and heavily favored the idea of conquest and expansion.

Peter Stuyvesant's warlike tendencies could be seen throughout his time in charge of New Amsterdam. From requests for more soldiers to actually invading villages. For the most part though, Stuyvesant preferred to deal with Indian tribes through diplomacy, but he had a more militaristic approach to other colonial

²⁹ Jacobs 2009, 33.

³⁰ Burrows & Wallace 1999, 43.

powers. For example, earlier when I mentioned him selling European weaponry to an Indian tribe, he purposefully sold the weapons to a tribe in New England's lands.

*It is now more than a full year since the Commissioners desiring to continue and Confirmed a fast and profitable peace between the English Colonies and the Dutch plantations in these parts wrought onto you and presented what they had heard: first Concerning a dangerous Liberty taken by yours to sell guns, powder and shot, and other Instruments of war to the Indians Both at Orrania forte And other places within the English Jurisdictions....*³¹

I think this was his way of using the tribe as a proxy to attack or hurt the English. To underline this point the leaders of Amsterdam, sent a letter to Stuyvesant asking him to stop unnecessary border disputes with the Swedish and the English.³² I do not believe Stuyvesant was diplomatic and friendly with the Indians just because he liked them, but I believe he thought he could use them, if he was on better terms with the tribes. Stuyvesant was very religious and contrary to the Dutch way he was not very tolerant of other religions. He had multiple conflicts with Jews and Lutherans and was known to be worried about New Netherland becoming too diverse in terms of religion.³³ For example, he had on multiple occasions banned Jews, Lutherans and Quakers from building houses of worship in New Amsterdam.³⁴ If he disliked other Christians this much, I cannot believe that he was just friends with the Indians.

Peter Stuyvesant's willingness to use his military was no secret between the European settlers living in North America. In a letter from an official from the village of Greenwich New England asked Stuyvesant's help with a dispute. The town of Greenwich had issues with the director of Stanford, another English colony, in that the director of Stanford tried to use Greenwich's director's weakness to take over their lands and increase their influence in Greenwich. The officials and settlers of Greenwich sent the letter to ask for help with the dispute. They specifically

³¹ New York State Archive New Netherland council Dutch colonial administrative correspondence, letter from commissioners of the united colonies (new England) (New York State Archives. New York (Colony). Council. Dutch colonial administrative correspondence, 1646-1664. Series A1810-78. Volume 11, documents 9b-9c & 9d, page 1, side 2.).

³² NYSA, NNCDAC, Letter from Amsterdam directors to Stuyvesant (New York State Archives. New York (Colony). Council. Dutch colonial administrative correspondence, 1646-1664. Series A1810-78. Volume 11, document 29b, page 1, side 1.).

³³ Burrows & Wallace 1999, 57.

³⁴ NNI History and heritage, Dutch Americans, Peter Stuyvesant.

asked for soldiers and militaristic help, which really shows what Stuyvesant was known for.³⁵ It was not too uncommon for villages to be in another country's land, and have to submit to that country's authority, for example some New England's towns were in the Dutch or the French areas, but it is still telling that they asked for the Dutch for soldiers. Outside of just helping with militaristic disputes and using the Indians for proxy attacks, Stuyvesant also conquered other colonies. In the summer of 1655 Stuyvesant lead an army to the colony of New Sweden on the banks of Delaware River and took over the colony. New Sweden was renamed to New Amstel and the colony was absorbed into New Netherland.³⁶

These disputes did not always even need to be with someone from another country. For the longest time Stuyvesant had a tumultuous relationship with the director of Rensselaerswick, another Dutch town in New Netherland. At first Rensselaerswick's leader, Van Slichtenhorst, refused to obey some of Stuyvesant's orders and rules, feeling they were not just. At the height of the dispute Stuyvesant marched a large group of his soldiers into Rensselaerswick, kept it hostage and demanded loyalty to him and the WIC from the leaders and the sheriff of the town.³⁷

*He presumed to apprehend the Colony's director Brant van Slechtenhorst with eight armed soldiers in the Colony's own jurisdiction, and brought him to Fort Orange, and from there sent him below as a prisoner with four soldiers, and held him under arrest on Manhattan.*³⁸

This quote tells even more about his continuous rivalry and hatred for Rensselaerswick's general director Slechtenhorst, going as far as arresting him during the attack on Rensselaerswick. After taking over Rensselaerswick Stuyvesant wanted to keep a stronger hold on the village by demanding that he was informed of the colony's court cases and such important matters. This information would give

³⁵ NYSA NNCDAC, Greenwich resident to Stuyvesant (New York State Archives. New York (Colony). Council. Dutch colonial administrative correspondence, 1646-1664. Series A1810-78. Volume 11, document 16, side 1.).

³⁶ Wiarda 2007, 54.

³⁷ NYSA NNCDAC, Protest of Johannes van Rensselaer against director Stuyvesant. (New York State Archives. New York (Colony). Council. Dutch colonial administrative correspondence, 1646-1664. Series A1810-78. Volume 11, document 76, page 1, side 1.).

³⁸ NYSA NNCDAC, Protest of Johannes van Rensselaer against director Stuyvesant. (New York State Archives. New York (Colony). Council. Dutch colonial administrative correspondence, 1646-1664. Series A1810-78. Volume 11, document 76, page 1, side 1.).

him significant amount of power over the village, and the possibility to justify another takeover, if he ever got information of unhappiness in the colony. Maybe Stuyvesant was insecure and just could not take a dissenting voice in his colony. But it was about more than that, I think Peter Stuyvesant truly believed that he could grow the colony to greatness. I think he believed he could realize New Netherland's true potential if he was given the control over the colony. I believe this because he acted the same way when in control of the ABC islands, where his way of leading has been described as authoritarian.³⁹ Stuyvesant had seen what he could do when given full control, and probably believed he could do the same in New Amsterdam.

³⁹ NNI history and heritage, Dutch Americans, Peter Stuyvesant.

2. Peter Stuyvesant's time in office and relation with the settlers.

2.1 The extent of Peter Stuyvesant's power

As expected, Stuyvesant held quite a lot more power than the previous director generals. Obviously, it was deserved since he was experienced in handling a colony from his work in Curacao, but I must ask did he take it too far? His future military conflicts and the reaction of the rulers of Amsterdam lead me to believe that they thought he sometimes took it too far, but more about that later. Another interesting part is comparing the limits set for Stuyvesant and his predecessors. There are interesting differences, shown in letters from the rulers of Amsterdam to Willem Kieft. In a message from Kieft to Amsterdam he is asking for permissions to buy more lands for the colony.⁴⁰ In comparison Stuyvesant was granted the power to buy when he wanted. This was displayed in 1651 when Stuyvesant bought a large amount of land for New Amsterdam, and doing this without the WIC.⁴¹ I cannot say this did not have to be approved in Amsterdam but I also cannot find a request for approval in their correspondence, and since in Stuyvesant's first five years he was given the power to deny a person's right to own land in New Netherland if he so wished.⁴² Kieft also lacked something Stuyvesant had in abundance: authority. There was an instance where a settler called Jansen criticized Kieft, notably calling him a villain, and Kieft wanted to banish him from the colony. Kieft did not seem to hold that much authority since Jansen never left New Netherland.⁴³ The sources do not clearly state what he could and could not do, so the best way to see what the limits of his authority were, is to look at the correspondence between him and the directors of Amsterdam. In these letters I can find many things that gave him the power to do things that really should be up to higher ups in the WIC.

⁴⁰ NNI ROPS, volume 3, 173.

⁴¹ NNI ROPS, volume 3, 309.

⁴² NYSA NNCDAC, Letter from Amsterdam directors to Stuyvesant (New York State Archives. New York (Colony). Council. Dutch colonial administrative correspondence, 1646-1664. Series A1810-78. Volume 11, document 29b, page 1, side 1.).

⁴³ NNI ROPS, volume 2, 108.

For Stuyvesant to amass the power and control that he did, he had to practically remake the government of New Netherland. In the early years of his time in office he managed to make a deal with the directors of Amsterdam for a system in the colony. The new system would consist of its own court, run by the burgmeesters and schepens that Stuyvesant appointed and of a municipal administration that consisted of the magistrates and of the Nine Men committee.⁴⁴ The magistrates and the committee members were also appointed by Stuyvesant and worked below him. It's quite easy to see how much control this gave Stuyvesant. An interesting point I found was in a letter from a man named George Baxter to Stuyvesant, where he asks for Stuyvesant to block someone from getting a position as a magistrate

Shall only humbly propose to your consideration: that by our pattent we are bound to choose the ablest, wisest and discreetest amongst us and of the which, you are to be the Judge, not they and for mine own part, & some others we cannot approve of the choice of some of them, my reasons being it is a great dishonour to government and to your own person to have an undeserving or an unworthy man represent your place...⁴⁵.

The sources do not answer if Stuyvesant did this or not, but it does show that it seemed to be commonly assumed that Stuyvesant had the authority to do this. Stuyvesant was also known in his earlier years for filling all possible positions of power with men who supported him and the WIC, so I do not doubt that he exploited his power. His eagerness could be seen in things such as the way he controlled the Nine Men committee created to represent the settlers.⁴⁶ In correspondence with the directors of Amsterdam they even grant Stuyvesant some more control of the colony. In 1651 they granted Stuyvesant the power to control who can own land and who cannot. They mention that they do not want people against Stuyvesant and the WIC to own land in New Netherland, and that they trust Stuyvesant to make the decisions on

⁴⁴ Jacob 2009, 86.

⁴⁵ NYSA NNCDAC Letter from George Baxter to Stuyvesant (New York State Archives. New York (Colony). Council. Dutch colonial administrative correspondence, 1646-1664. Series A1810-78. Volume 11, document 24b, side 1.).

⁴⁶ Jacob 2009, 86.

this.⁴⁷ Even with just 4 years into his time in New Netherland, the trust in Peter Stuyvesant seems significant. Apparently to the directors that Stuyvesant worked for, he was doing a great job. In a later letter the directors in Amsterdam compliment Stuyvesant and tell him they were happy with his leadership. They also especially bring out how well he works with the soldiers that he has been granted.⁴⁸

I'm interested if Stuyvesant told the directors in Amsterdam the full truth of what he did with the soldiers in North America, because as I mentioned earlier there were points when the Directors of WIC told him to relax with the border disputes with other nations' colonies. I also think that possibly Stuyvesant did tell exactly how he used his soldiers, but just at some point during his time as director general the leaders in Amsterdam had a change of heart, and later decided to lessen military conflicts. I believe more in the latter, mostly because it seems smart to lessen conflicts when Stuyvesant is managing to bring the colony to higher importance, when earlier in its years it was not that important to Holland. Just like when Stuyvesant was the director of the ABC islands, those islands were pretty much completely under WIC control and Holland's government let them decide how they managed the islands.⁴⁹ They seemed to have the same attitude with New Netherland, before realizing it's true potential. Once they realized how valuable New Netherland could be, they started an active correspondence with Stuyvesant and asked him to start building more diplomatic relations with the neighboring colonies. Although, considering Stuyvesant's ambitious and driven personality, it is conceivable he cut corners and offered his directors a more embellished picture, in hopes of more control.

2.2 Peter Stuyvesant and the settlers of New Amsterdam

⁴⁷ NYSA NNCDAC Letter from Amsterdam directors to Stuyvesant (New York State Archives. New York (Colony). Council. Dutch colonial administrative correspondence, 1646-1664. Series A1810-78. Volume 11, document 29b, page 1, side 1.).

⁴⁸ NYSA NNCDAC Letters from Amsterdam to Stuyvesant (New York State Archives. New York (Colony). Council. Dutch colonial administrative correspondence, 1646-1664. Series A1810-78. Volume 11, document 83, page 1, side 1.).

⁴⁹ NNI history and heritage, Dutch Americans, Peter Stuyvesant.

The settlers of New Netherland probably were not used to the type of leader Peter Stuyvesant turned out to be. All of the previous leaders had been differing levels of incompetent and did not have too tight of a grip on the colony. On top of this Holland was known for religious freedom and quite lax governing.⁵⁰ Peter Stuyvesant was nowhere near as tolerant with other religions, which must have hurt his reputation with the settlers. For example, early into his time in office he wanted to take control of the Dutch Reformed church, and to accomplish this he banned some ministers from entering the colony.⁵¹ I believe that he targeted ministers with differing opinions or those who were too tolerant for his taste, since he only banned some ministers and not all of them. Stuyvesant was not an easygoing leader either. In an ordinance, he complains how he is unhappy how the colony's soldiers and officers are not as presentable and distinguished as he would like them to be.

*The director general, Petrus Stuyvesant, as captain of his company, observing that the last issued order, dated 7 October 1655, concerning the appearance before the colors at the beat of the drum, and the posting of and remaining on guard, is not observed and obeyed by the superior and inferior officers as it ought to be, and as is customary in all garrisons; therefore, notifies and commands all officers and soldiers of his company: ... No one shall come to guard duty drunk or be allowed to drink while standing guard, on penalty of one daalder and as much more as a replacement shall earn who is commanded and brought in his place to the guard by the captain lieutenant or sergeant....*⁵²

Peter Stuyvesant's strictness and swift actions to gain control must have been a shock to the settlers, who were used to having a certain amount of autonomy.

For a fact some of the settlers living in New Amsterdam were not happy with Stuyvesant coming to the colony. In the autumn of 1648, a protest was held against Stuyvesant.⁵³ It is unclear what these protests were about, but they could have just been about the settlers not liking Stuyvesant gaining control, or about some

⁵⁰ Jacobs 2009, 32.

⁵¹ NNI history and heritage, Dutch Americans, Peter Stuyvesant.

⁵² NYSA council Dutch colonial ordinances, Ordinance for soldiers (New York State Archives. New Netherland. Council. Dutch colonial ordinances, 1647-1658. Series A1875. Volume 16.).

⁵³ NNI ROPS volume 3, 66.

of his early decisions. Some of his early controversial decisions were things such as ordering a strict following of Sunday rest and banning the sale of weaponry and alcoholic beverages by individuals to the Indian tribes.⁵⁴ This was a sizeable hit to the income of those who benefitted of selling to the local Indians, and that surely creates some resentment. Even in correspondence with the rulers of Amsterdam it is mentioned that even they have heard things across the Atlantic to the Netherlands, that the people do not like Stuyvesant and people have protested and tried to fought back against his government.⁵⁵ Another fact telling of the settlers' feelings toward Peter Stuyvesant come from his nickname. For context it is important to know, that while he was the director of the ABC islands, he lost one of his legs in a battle, and spent the rest of his life with an artificial peg for a leg. As a result of this, the New Netherlands' settlers expressed their distaste for him with the nickname: peg leg Stuyvesant.⁵⁶ This seems very cruel since this kind of disability must be quite a sensitive subject for Stuyvesant, and the lack of empathy from the settlers truly shows their dislike towards him.

Stuyvesant received criticism even from some of the more known and accomplished settlers of New Amsterdam. One of whom was Adriaen Van Der Donck, who was known as the first lawyer of New Netherland and a prominent landowner in New Netherland. Van Der Donck wrote letters on multiple occasions criticizing the way the WIC and Stuyvesant ran the colony. He pointed out how he felt like the WIC and Stuyvesant were more focused on profits than the quality of life of the people living there. He demanded the rulers of Amsterdam to replace the WIC government with a government system run by the settlers.⁵⁷ Even he accused Peter Stuyvesant of governing like a dictator. Another instance is the case where a man heard three naval merchants talking bad about Stuyvesant. The merchants accused Stuyvesant of ruining their trade and costing them huge deficits.⁵⁸ One of the merchants was even heard saying, that he took down Kieft and will do the same to Stuyvesant. Both of these men represent the more established and powerful people of New Amsterdam, which shows that Stuyvesant was not just unpopular with the so-

⁵⁴ University of Groningen, Biography, Peter Stuyvesant.

⁵⁵ NYSA NNCDAC, Letter from Amsterdam directors to Stuyvesant (New York State Archives. New York (Colony). Council. Dutch colonial administrative correspondence, 1646-1664. Series A1810-78. Volume 11, document 29b, page 1, side 1.).

⁵⁶ NNI history and heritage, Dutch Americans, Peter Stuyvesant.

⁵⁷ Jacobs 2009, 83.

⁵⁸ NNI ROPS volume 3, 83.

called lower classes of the colony. Even the people who had wealth and were quite successful did not like how Stuyvesant was shaping New Amsterdam. I find it interesting that it seems like people of all economic classes disliked Stuyvesant, and only he and the WIC seemed to really benefit.

I think it is worth mentioning that other previous director generals of New Netherland have faced their fair share of criticism. As I mentioned earlier, a tailor called Jansen had criticized Kieft on a couple of occasions, going as far as endorsing Kieft's execution.

People Ought to send the Kivit (meaning thereby the director) to Holland in the ship De Pauw and give him a letter of recommendation to Master Gerrit, whom he would willingly send a pound of Flemish in order that he should let him die like a nobleman.⁵⁹

This case is the extreme of course, but it does show that the settlers were not all completely happy with Kieft. However, most criticism toward Kieft involved Jansen and few others, indicating that Kieft had few sworn enemies, but was not disliked by the whole colony, like Peter Stuyvesant was. Kieft was not protested, and he surely was not the target of a malicious nickname, used throughout New Netherland.

⁵⁹ NNI ROPS, volume 2, 120.

Conclusion

In this thesis I wanted to get a deep look into Dutch colonialism in America and Peter Stuyvesant provided a good representation of that for this study. I think studies like this are important because the subject of New Netherland is not a very popular thing to study, especially for non-Dutch audiences. In particular, books about Peter Stuyvesant are quite rare to find in English and I think studies like this can fill a void. I also think my study differs from other studies of this subject because I am not Dutch and look at the topic as more of an outsider than most of the previous researchers.

My first research question was: how did Peter Stuyvesant govern as the director general and how powerful was he in the colony? I found quite strong evidence to prove that Stuyvesant ruled with an iron fist. He had extensive amounts of power granted to him by the higher ups in the WIC and also by the rulers of Amsterdam, which allowed him to rule the colony almost like a dictator. To some extent this was justified because he managed to grow the colony considerably and he was actually experienced in managing colonies from prior time in office in the ABC islands. His usage of this power did however go quite far and could be called abuse. This was displayed in actions like having a feud with another director and letting it grow to the point of Stuyvesant attacking and taking over another Dutch village. This little episode was part of a section in the second chapter in which I did not set a strict research question. Instead I was interested in finding out how did the settlers of New Netherland react to the new style of governing that Peter Stuyvesant brought and what was the relationship between them and him. I quickly found out that the people of New Netherland truly disliked Stuyvesant. From hurtful nicknames all the way to protests, the people were not shy about their resentment.

Even with going through the sources that are available to me, I feel like I'm just scratching the surface. The study of New Netherland and Dutch colonialism

can be taken so much further, than I did in this thesis. Even with just the translated English sources, there are still thousands of documents, focusing on the lives of the settlers, that could provide some fascinating revelations. Of course, the true next step is to dig into the original, Dutch sources. However, I do not see the ability to read 17th century Dutch in my near future, so I will have to leave this task to the more experienced researchers. Outside of more sources there are just other questions that could provide fruitful results. Subjects such as the English takeover. The city of New Amsterdam could provide a very tangible way to compare Dutch and English colonialism and colonial time. There are so many possible questions to study, but those will be left for the future.

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